

YOUR LEGISLATOR AT WORK!



By VINCENT THOMAS
68th Assembly District

Members in both house of your legislature heaved a big collective sigh of relief as the budget act for fiscal 1958-59 was finally given an okay by a one vote margin in the Senate, and was sent on its way to the Governor for signature. With the completion of that surprisingly difficult task, we had carried out our responsibility of providing the money to run the many functions of your state government for another full year. But it wasn't easy, as the political news columns of the newspapers have more than adequately testified in recent weeks.

The stand-out feature of the new budget act is not its size—the \$1 billion, 999 million total was \$56 million less than the total requested by the Governor—but rather the fact that it is wrung completely "dry." There's not a dollar in it for new water facility construction. The boys in blue and gray of the current titanic struggle over water between north and south succeeded in knocking each other completely out.

Those from the north didn't get the building funds for the Feather River Project they fought so valiantly for. Those from the south didn't get the water rights constitutional amendment upon which they based their whole campaign. The whole war will have to be fought over again at the 1959 regular session. Neither side is happy—each is just exhausted.

This huge budget is both the largest in our state's history, and the largest state budget in the nation. We, as your legislators, and you, the citizens of California, are equally fortunate that reserves built up in previous years enabled us to finance it without levying any new taxes. Because of the continued rapid growth of our great state with its consequent demand for expansion in state services, it doesn't seem likely that the next budget can be financed without turning to new sources of state revenue.

We are confident that every California citizen, man, woman and child, will get the full value for every tax dollar to be spent under the new budget. As a matter of fact, all the experts, including our own legislative analyst, agree that it is a very "tight" budget, with nary a trace of pork-barrel lard in it. It's huge for two good reasons. For one, our state itself is huge. It takes money and lots of it to provide the residents of both Imperial and Modoc Counties as well as those of all other 56 counties with the same high quality of state government service.

For the other, Californians insist upon the most modern and efficient state services, and over the years have demanded many services which other states do not provide. It costs real money to give such quality service, but let the continuance of one extra service be even questioned in committee hearing, and your legislators hear about it, but good.

Proof of this latter fact is evident in the total of \$796 million appropriated for education—forty cents out of each dollar budgeted. No other state in the union spends as much per capita for education; no other state spends as much per child or youth enrolled in public schools. Yet, recent events in the inter-actuary age have made many people question the quality and value of the education we are providing at such great expense. So your legislature has established a joint interim committee on the public educational system, to dig out the hard facts. During the months to come this group will be investigating our teaching process, to find out whether we are educating Joe and Betty as loyal Americans, giving them the knowledge and skills needed to cope with our nuclear age.

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